

## CLAIMS

1. A method for providing incentive to play gaming devices connected by a network to a host computer comprising:

associating each gaming device with a card reader;

issuing a card to a gaming device player;

creating a player account accessible by the host computer;

associating the card with the player account;

applying a predetermined credit to the player's account;

debiting the account responsive to insertion of the card into one of the card readers; and

crediting the gaming device associated with said one card reader with the amount debited from the account.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the step of debiting the account responsive to insertion of the card into one of the card readers comprises debiting the account by the maximum number of coins payable on the gaming device responsive to insertion of the card into one of the card readers.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein said method further comprises preventing debiting the account beyond a predetermined time period.

4. The method of claim 3 wherein said method further comprises entering an end time in the player's account and preventing debiting the account after the end time.

5. The method of claim 4 wherein said method further comprises entering a start time in the player's account and preventing debiting the account before the start time.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein said method further comprises debiting the account by the maximum number of coins payable on the gaming

device responsive to the completion of each game played by the player on the gaming device and crediting the gaming device associated with said one card reader with the amount debited from the account each time the account is debited.

5 7. The method of claim 1 wherein said method comprises paying jackpots won by the player on the gaming device by applying a credit to a credit meter in the gaming device.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said method comprises paying jackpots won by the player on the gaming device by paying coins from the machine to the player.

10 9. The method of claim 1 wherein paying any jackpots won as a result of gaming device play utilizing credit from the player account to the player comprises hand paying the jackpot.

15 10. The method of claim 1 wherein said method further includes issuing a second card associated with the player account and associating the second card with the player account.

11. The method of claim 10 wherein said method further includes the step of preventing debiting the account responsive to insertion of one of the cards into one of the card readers when the other card is inserted into one of the card readers.

20 12. The method of claim 1 wherein said method further includes the step of displaying the current amount of credit in a player's account.

13. A method for providing incentive to play gaming devices connected by a network to a host computer comprising:

associating each gaming device with a card reader;

25 issuing a card to a gaming device player;

5 associating the card with the player account;  
creating a player account accessible by the host computer;  
applying a predetermined credit to the player's account;  
accessing information in the player account responsive to insertion of the  
card into one of the card readers;  
debiting the account;  
crediting the gaming device associated with said one card reader with the  
amount debited from the account; and  
paying to the player any jackpots which result from gaming device play  
utilizing credit from the player account.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein paying to the player any jackpots  
which result from gaming device play utilizing credit from the player account  
comprises paying coins from the machine to the player.

15 15. The method of claim 13 wherein paying to the player any jackpots  
which result from gaming device play utilizing credit from the player account  
comprises applying a credit to a credit meter in the gaming device.

16. The method of claim 13 wherein paying to the player any jackpots  
which result from gaming device play utilizing credit from the player account  
comprises hand paying the jackpot.

20 17. The method of claim 13 wherein the step of making the credit in the  
player's account accessible by the gaming device responsive to insertion of the  
card into the card reader associated with the gaming device comprises debiting the  
account by the maximum number of coins payable on the gaming device  
responsive to insertion of the card into the card reader associated with the gaming  
25 device.

18. The method of claim 13 wherein said method further includes the  
step of displaying the current amount of credit in a player's account.

19. A method for providing incentive to play gaming devices connected by a network to a host computer comprising:

associating each gaming device with a card reader;

issuing a card to a gaming device player;

creating a player account accessible by the host computer;

associating the card with the player account;

applying a credit to the player's account;

accessing information in the player account responsive to insertion of the card into one of the card readers; and

applying credit from the player account to the gaming device associated with said one card reader responsive to a coin inserted into the gaming device.

20. The method of claim 19 wherein the credit applied from the player account is equal to the value of the coin inserted into the gaming device.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein said method further comprises applying credit from the player account to the gaming device associated with said one card reader each time a coin is inserted into the gaming device.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the credit applied from the player account is equal to the value of the coin inserted into the gaming device.

23. The method of claim 19 wherein said method further comprises establishing a predetermined condition which must be met before applying credit from the player account to the gaming device associated with said one card reader responsive to a coin inserted into the gaming device.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said predetermined condition comprises a minimum number of coins played.

25. The method of claim 19 wherein said method further comprises

applying a predetermined credit to the player's account each time a predetermined condition is met.

26. The method of claim 25 wherein said predetermined condition comprises a minimum number of coins played.

5 27. The method of claim 19 wherein applying a credit to the player's account comprises applying a predetermined credit to the player's account each time the player plays a predetermined amount of money.